

## Rezension: Zurab Karumidze; James V. Wertsch (Hrsg.): "Enough!": The Rose Revolution in the Republic of Georgia

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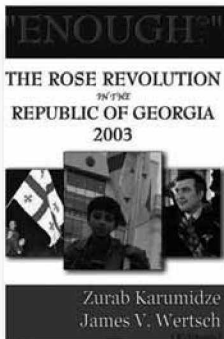
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Central Asian politics present a rather exclusionary framework – maybe future studies could consider a midway approach that explores the interaction between the influence of informal politics and practices and the elite level actors and emerging formal institutions. This would allow for a more open approach to the diverse factors and agents impacting post-Soviet political development in Central Asia.

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Zurab Karumidze/James V. Wertsch (eds.), "Enough!" The Rose Revolution in the Republic of Georgia 2003, New York 2005 (Nova Science Publishers), 143 S.

Numerous analyses have been written about the so-called 'coloured revolutions,' unearthing the causes that led to the downfall of the (semi-) authoritarian regimes in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005). In general, this literature can be divided into two approaches. On one hand, the bottom-up approach identifies the opposition and its ability to mobilize the masses as the primary force that drove the Milosevic, Shevardnadze, Kuchma/Yanukovich, and Akaev regimes from power.<sup>1</sup> Within this approach, we can further differentiate between those authors who emphasize the role of Western governments and international organizations in strengthening the opposition and other authors who downplay the impact of foreign support, emphasizing the home-grown strength of opposition movements.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the state-centrist approach attributes the collapse of the incumbents to their inability to control the state apparatus' coercive forces.<sup>3</sup>

*Enough!* does not side with either approach. Its editors, Zurab Karumidze and James V. Wertsch, eschew larger theoretical questions. Instead, the editors provide us with a rich empirical account of the 2003 events in Georgia, starting

- 1 For example, Eric McGlinchey, Central Asian Protest Movements: Social Forces or State Resources? In: Amanda Wooden/Christoph H. Stefes (eds.) Politics of Transition in Central Asia and the Caucasus, New York/Oxford 2008 (forthcoming); Michael McFaul, Transitions from Postcommunism. In: Journal of Democracy, 16 (2005)3, pp. 5–19.
- 2 While Lincoln Mitchell emphasizes the crucial role of Western organizations and governments, Michael McFaul treats foreign support as less important. McFaul, Transitions from Postcommunism; Lincoln Mitchell, Explaining Georgia's Rose Revolution. In: Current History, (October 2004), pp. 342–348.
- 3 For instance, Lucan Way, State Power and Autocratic Stability: Armenia and Georgia Compared. In: Wooden/ Stefes (eds.) Politics of Transition (forthcoming).

with a comprehensive chronicle of the Rose Revolution, followed by interviews with some of the key domestic and foreign players (e.g. Presidents Mikhail Saakashvili and Eduard Shevardnadze, US Ambassador Richard Miles, and NGO activist David Zurabishvili), and concluding with five analytical articles by Georgian analysts and a summary article by James Wertsch. The insights that this case study provides are impressive and allow us to reassess the validity of the above mentioned theoretical approaches.

Karumidze and Wertsch provide ample empirical support for the state-centrist approach. Throughout the events, the police and internal military forces remained neutral, hesitating to break up the massive demonstrations of tens of thousands of Georgians who protested against the vote-rigging during the parliamentary elections. As they had not received salaries for months, their loyalty to the government was half hearted.<sup>4</sup> However, their resolve was also not tested, as President Shevardnadze never gave orders to disperse the demonstrators.<sup>5</sup> *Enough!* also chronicles how divisions within Shevardnadze's cabinet left the president without a good sense of what happened on the ground, which prevented him from developing adequate responses to the protests. In the end, as most observers and opposition leaders argue, Shevardnadze's downfall could have been avoided, had the president ordered a recount of the ballots or a new election.<sup>6</sup>

*Enough!* also provides empirical support for the bottom-up approach. As Wertsch in his concluding article argues, "a vibrant civil society, especially in the form of NGOs [and] a free press" were crucial in bringing about the Rose Revolution.<sup>7</sup> NGOs and especially one independent TV-station (Rustavi-2) had been instrumental in informing the public about the many wrongdoings of the Shevardnadze government long before 2003. During the 2003 elections, they detected and made public numerous incidences of electoral fraud. Finally, Rustavi-2's live coverage of the events, as well as the rallying efforts of the NGOs and the opposition parties, brought up to 200,000 people to the street – a mass critical enough, according to Mikhail Saakashvili, to force the resignation of Shevardnadze.<sup>8</sup> As Political analyst Ghia Nodia summarizes: "a political opposi-

4 Interviews with opposition leader Zurab Zhvania and then National Security Advisor Tedo Japaridze (Karumidze and Wertsch, p. 39 and 54).

5 Interview with Eduard Shevardnadze (Karumidze and Wertsch, p. 30). In this interview, Shevardnadze admitted that the police and military forces were divided, which discouraged him to order their deployment, to avoid bloodshed. Shevardnadze's hesitancy and the division of the coercive apparatus stands in stark contrast to recent events, during which Shevardnadze's successor, President Saakashvili, ordered a loyal coercive apparatus to dispel anti-government protests with massive use of force.

6 Interviews with opposition leader Nino Burjanadze, civil society activist David Zurabishvili, and Tedo Japaridze in Karumidze and Wertsch.

7 In Karumidze and Wertsch, p. 133.

8 Interview with Mikhail Saakashvili in Karumidze and Wertsch. It should be noted that, unlike most other observers and opposition leaders (e.g. David Zurbabishvili and George Nizharadze), Saakashvili downplays the role of the NGOs with whom the new president had an uneasy relationship before and after the Rose Revolution.

tion provided leadership, the media were crucial for delegitimizing the regime and mobilizing public protests, and civil society organizations laid the groundwork with their civic education efforts and contributed to better organizations of public protests.”<sup>9</sup>

The importance of western influence in strengthening opposition parties, independent media, and NGOs is contested throughout the book. While Shevardnadze identifies the US embassy, the National Democratic Institute, and the Soros Foundation as critical supporters and instigators of the revolution, the majority of the contributors to *Enough!* argue that foreign support was not crucial for the success of the opposition movement. While US insistence on fair elections and non-violence might have given further legitimacy to the opposition’s demands and discouraged Shevardnadze from using force, “long festering social problems and difficulties [...] culminated in the action which we saw after the most massive fraud imaginable in the elections.”<sup>10</sup> In the end, Aleksei Malashenko is probably correct when he argues that Shevardnadze’s fall might have been less the consequence of what Western governments did but more of what they did not do – namely, continuing to support a regime that had entirely lost its early enthusiasm for democratic and economic reforms.<sup>11</sup>

After reading *Enough!*, it is obvious that neither of the two theoretical approaches can provide us with a complete explanation of what happened in Georgia. In fact, a comprehensive explanation needs to take into account that Georgia’s state and society had constituted one another in ways that eventually caused the collapse of the Shevardnadze regime. As Wertsch rightly states, the weakness of the coercive apparatus was “only the tip of the iceberg. The bigger story is how a weak state in effect allowed NGOs and the opposition media to emerge and fill a vacuum. This, in turn, allowed the NGOs and media to challenge and ultimately erode state authority in increasingly assertive ways” (p. 137).

What remains missing from this book is an account of the reasons that motivated hundreds of thousands of Georgians to take to the streets of Tbilisi. Falsified elections, corruption, and perhaps the spread of democratic values are mentioned in passing. Economic decline and social disruptions are also brought up, but immediately discarded, as “Similar grievances can be found in many other countries, but no revolutions have broken out.”<sup>12</sup> However, Georgia has had more than its fair share of economic and social hardships. No other post-Soviet country has experienced a sharper economic decline and a slower economic recovery. By 2006, the estimated level of real GDP was still well below the 1989 level, while most other former Soviet republics already exceeded pre-inde-

9 Karumidze and Wertsch, p. 102.

10 Interview with US Ambassador Richard Miles (Karumidze and Wertsch, p. 78); see also interviews with Zurab Zhvania (p. 36) and David Zurabishvili (p. 64).

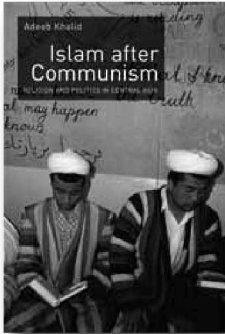
11 Interview with Aleksei Malashenko, representative of the Moscow Office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Karumidze and Wertsch, p. 88).

12 Wertsch, p. 132.

pendence levels by the late 1990s. Moreover, due to growing income inequality, most Georgians have not benefited from recent economic gains, condemning more than half of the population to live below the national poverty line.<sup>13</sup> It is therefore unlikely that social and economic hardships played only a secondary role during the Rose Revolution, as suggested in this volume. Interviews with ordinary citizens who participated in the demonstrations might have highlighted deeply felt socio-economic concerns, which are still widespread in post-2003 Georgia, severely eroding the popularity of President Saakashvili.

Nevertheless, *Enough!* is an empirically rich case study. Every scholar who intends to say something meaningful about the Rose Revolution will have to read this book. In fact, equally well-crafted studies of the revolutions in Serbia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan are needed to enrich our theoretical discussions about the causes and dynamics of the coloured revolutions. Unfortunately, our theoretical conclusions are rarely based on sound empirical foundations. Karumidze and Wertsch not only avoid this fallacy, but help in building these foundations.

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*Adeeb Khalid, Islam after Communism, Religion and Politics in Central Asia, Berkeley 2007 (University of California Press), 253 S.*

In the introduction to this book, Adeeb Khalid sets his stall in sharp opposition to accounts that focus on primordialist civilizational discourses and the inevitability of conflict on civilizational grounds. He takes particular aim at the by now (in)famous work of Samuel Huntington and his 'Clash of Civilizations' argument.<sup>1</sup> In framing this study of Islam in Central Asia, Khalid takes issue with such essentialist accounts of Islam and/or those that frame religious belief into mutually exclusive categories of moderate and extreme. For Khalid such accounts 'efface history' (p. 7), ignoring the social and religious diversity of Islamic belief and practice, and the disparate and complicated nature of interactions between Muslims and their neighbors.

Having framed his work in these terms, Khalid goes on to provide the reader with an accessible introduction to Islam in Central Asia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>

13 United Nations Human Development Programme, Human Development Report 2006. Accessible at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2006/>; retrieved on 23 November 2007.

1 See, for example, Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations? In: Foreign Affairs, 72 (1993) 3, pp. 22–49.